



NATIONAL INDIAN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

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NIEA Resolution 2016-08

TITLE: OPPOSITION TO VOUCHER PROGRAMS IN BUREAU OF INDIAN EDUCATION SCHOOLS

WHEREAS, the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) was established in 1970 for the purpose of advocating, planning, and promoting the unique and special educational needs of American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; and

WHEREAS, NIEA as the largest national Indian organization of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian educators, administrators, parents, and students in the United States, provides a forum to discuss and act upon issues affecting the education of Indian and Native people; and

WHEREAS, through its unique relationship with Indian nations and tribes, the federal government has established programs and resources to meet the educational needs of American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians, residing on and off their reserved or non-reserved homelands; and

WHEREAS, Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) voucher programs, such as those operated in Arizona and Nevada, are similar to a checking account with up to 90% of the state funding that would have been received by the K-12 public school the student previously attended; and

WHEREAS, under this program, parents receive a debit card to cover the cost of multiple education expenses, including private school tuition, online school expenses, textbooks, and tutoring from public school funding; and

WHEREAS, if ESAs expanded to Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) students, up to 90% of the per-pupil-expenditure that BIE would spend on a BIE-funded school, could be used to pay for educational expenses at a private school; and

WHEREAS, despite the pressing need for funding parity and equitable access, historical funding trends illustrate that the federal government has been abandoning its trust responsibility by not fully funding BIE; and

WHEREAS, as written, there is no distinction between BIE operated and funded schools – so that critical funding may be repurposed from tribally controlled schools as well; and

WHEREAS, tribes have overwhelmingly advocated for a tribally driven education as the best framework for teaching Native students; and

WHEREAS, programs such as ESAs undermine a tribally driven education because they pull funding from these schools to cover other educational expenses that do not require consultation with tribes; and

WHEREAS, research shows the school performance of Native students, has improved when they receive a tribally driven education. With the increase of test scores and proficiency in an environment that is most natural to Native students, a continued investment in supporting community driven initiatives and schools is warranted; and

WHEREAS, despite many independent studies of voucher programs across the country, there is no clear evidence that vouchers improve educational outcomes for participants. Studies of districts throughout the country show no significant test score gains in school districts with voucher programs.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that that the Native American Indian Education Association (NIEA) reaffirms its commitment to a tribally controlled education and opposes voucher programs such as ESAs for students attending BIE funded schools as a mechanism to better support Native students; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this resolution shall be the policy of NIEA until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

CERTIFICATION

I do hereby certify that the following resolution was dully considered and passed by the National Indian Education Association on October 7th, 2016 at which a quorum of the membership was present.



Patricia Whitefoot
President